A/52/29

United Nations

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean

General Assembly

Official Records • Fifty-second Session
Supplement No.29 (A/52/29)

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United Nations · New York, 1997

NOTE

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0255-1594

[Original: English]

[1 July 1997]

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 51/51 of 10 December 1996, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean[1] and requested the Ad Hoc Committee to examine its future work, taking into account, inter alia, the statement made by its Chairman on 8 July 1996, and to make recommendations for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-second session. The Assembly also requested the Ad Hoc Committee to submit to it at its fifty-second session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. Pursuant to resolution 51/51, the Ad Hoc Committee held its session on 30 June and 1 July 1997 at United Nations Headquarters. The Committee held three formal meetings during 1997.

3. The following delegations made statements in the general discussion under agenda item 4: Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Pakistan, Russian Federation and Sri lanka.

4. The Ad Hoc Committee is composed of the following States:

(a) Members (44):

Australia	Japan	Russian Federation
Bangladesh	Kenya	Seychelles
Bulgaria	Liberia	Singapore
Canada	Madagascar	Somalia
China	Malaysia	Sri Lanka
Djibouti	Maldives	Sudan
Egypt	Mauritius	Thailand
Ethiopia	Mozambique	Uganda
Germany	Netherlands	United Arab Emirates
Greece	Norway	United Republic of Tanzania
India	Oman	Yemen
Indonesia	Pakistan	Yugoslavia[2]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Panama	Zambia
Iraq	Poland	Zimbabwe
Italy	Romania	

(b) Observers: Nepal, South Africa and Sweden.

5. The elected officers of the Ad Hoc Committee were the following:

Chairman: Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva (Sri Lanka)

Vice-Chairmen: Ms. Genevieve Hamilton (Australia)
Mr. Carlos dos Santos (Mozambique)
Mr. Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat (Indonesia)

Rapporteur: Ms. Jocelyne Lingaya (Madagascar)

II. WORK OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE IN 1997

A. Agenda of the Ad Hoc Committee

6. At its 444th meeting, on 30 June 1997, the Ad Hoc Committee adopted the following agenda (A/AC.159/L.126):

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda.

3. Election of Vice-Chairmen.

4. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/51 of 16 December 1996:

(a) General discussion with regard to the future work of the Committee;

(b) Recommendations of the Committee to be considered by the General Assembly.

5. Other matters.

6. Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

B. Election of Vice-Chairmen and other matters

7. It was decided to postpone the election of the Vice-Chairman from the Group of Eastern European States to the next session.

8. The Committee also reaffirmed its decision to continue to maintain summary records of its proceedings.

C. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/51

9. During its three formal meetings, held on 30 June and 1 July (444th-446th meetings), the Ad Hoc Committee considered agenda item 4, on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/51.

10. During those meetings an exchange of views took place on, inter alia, the future work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

11. The Ad Hoc Committee heard a number of statements relating to recent initiatives taken by countries pertaining to cooperation, in particular economic cooperation, in the Indian Ocean region.

12. The Ad Hoc Committee reaffirmed the conclusions it had reached during its 1994, 1995 and 1996 sessions and emphasized the need to foster consensual, step-by-step approaches, in particular given the propitious international climate, which was conducive to the pursuit of such endeavours. The Committee reaffirmed its commitment to the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

13. The Ad Hoc Committee remained convinced that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users in the work of the Committee was important and would assist the progress of a mutually beneficial dialogue aimed at developing conditions of peace, security and stability in the region.

14. The Committee noted the following comprehensive statement made by the Chairman, in which he suggested a possible course of action for the Committee:

"With the international political environment having undergone rapid and radical changes, great Power rivalry replaced by a welcome face of confidence, trust and cooperation, propitious opportunities now exist once again for renewed multilateral and regional efforts towards the realization of the goals of maintaining conditions of peace, security and stability by means other than military alliances in the Indian Ocean region.

"The achievement of these goals would seem more realistic in the current context than they were in the past. The support of the General Assembly expressed through its resolution 51/51, though not unanimous, has been encouraging. A number of resolutions concerning the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world, including the nuclear-free Southern Hemisphere, the beginning of the in-depth consideration of the nuclear-weapon-free zone issue by the United Nations Disarmament Commission, the setting up of new regional structures for the promotion of economic, cultural, trade and other cooperation and gradual introduction of the system of confidence-building measures make it possible to have a fresh look at the alternative approaches adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee at its 1994 session.

"I believe that this document reflects fairly well the broad agenda before the Committee. As such it should be treated as a valuable repository of ideas, which sets forth general guiding principles to implement the goals of the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.[3] It allows a step-by-step approach for the Committee to move forward.

"At this stage I wish respectfully to suggest a course of action for you to give some thought and consideration to. If one looks at the annex of the 1994 report of the Ad Hoc Committee, containing the list of new alternative approaches proposed by members, one can easily discern that it may be broadly grouped into four major categories. These are some possible cooperative strategies; techniques of preventive diplomacy; measures of arms control and disarmament arrangements; and non-military threats of security. They are wide-ranging in scope and need to be defined and refined if they are to serve any practical purpose.

"Perhaps it may be a good thing for the members of the Committee to identify certain priority concerns and ideas that could be appropriate for in-depth study. The following session or sessions of the Committee could then be devoted exclusively to their consideration and further deliberation and maybe even negotiations at some later stage with a view to reaching a consensus document or documents. As a first step, the Committee could consider selecting from the aforesaid list the specific proposal concerning 'confidence- and trust-building measures' and, based on the existing United Nations documents in this area, it could possibly negotiate a set of principles and guidelines for confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy and cooperation that are tailored to the needs and specific

requirements of the region. Such a document could be a short one, perhaps one or two pages in length. At a subsequent session, depending on the progress made, the Committee could select other items and adopt a similar approach. The overall aim of such an approach would be to formulate three or four and maybe more consensus documents of the Committee, which would in a concise, action-oriented manner seek to give expression and embody the international political climate and prevalent thinking, as well as the viewpoints of the Member States.

"To be successful in this approach the Committee would no doubt require not only the active participation of Member States but also active support and encouragement from the big Powers and the major maritime users, for peace is a collective undertaking and a common enterprise. Let me reiterate the conviction that their return to the Ad Hoc Committee would have a most profound and positive influence on the course of our discussions and ensure their viability. However, in the light of my consultations held last year with them, it seems clear to me that as far as they are concerned, serious conceptual objections still remain. The process of bringing those absent members back to the Committee may best be achieved by adopting a dual track: on the one hand, the Committee should itself demonstrate, through what may appear to be small yet significant steps, its further viability and ability to produce concrete results. On the other hand, States that have not participated actively in the work of the Committee over the last few years should show greater enthusiasm and interest and thus encourage all other Member States and extend to them their cooperation in achieving the ultimate goal the Committee was set up to fulfil.

"These preliminary thoughts on the future course of action of course represent only one possible approach. There are other fruitful avenues to be explored. They could perhaps serve as a springboard for other interesting suggestions, which together could form a new beginning fo. the Ad Hoc Committee."

15. A number of delegations made statements in support of the approach outlined in the Chairman's statement. Since no consensus was reached on this, the Chairman was requested to continue informal consultations with the membership of the Committee and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

D. Introduction and adoption of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session

16. At its 446th meeting, on 1 July 1997, the Rapporteur of the Ad Hoc Committee introduced the draft report of the Committee (A/AC.159/L.127).

17. In this connection, the Chairman informed the Members of the Committee of his intention to hold informal consultations concerning the text of the resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session.

18. At the same meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee considered and adopted its draft report to the General Assembly (A/AC.159/L.127).

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 29 (A/51/29).

[2] General Assembly resolution 47/1 applies.

[3] Resolution 2832 (XXVI).

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